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POLYPTOTON IN TIBULLUS AND PROPERTIUS

BY GEORGE HOWE

In order to carry still further Miss Breazeale's comparison of Ovid with his immediate predecessors in respect of the interesting form of repetition known as polyptoton, it has seemed worth while to examine the elegy of the Corpus Tibullianum and of Propertius.

The results of such examination are surprisingly negative. If pronouns, forms of the verb *esse*, and changes of inflection involving different roots be left out of the reckoning, as was done in the previous studies, the occurrence of the figure is extremely rare. Polyptoton is to be found indeed in the work of each of these poets, but so infrequently that it seems, as Miss Breazeale remarked of Vergil, almost accidental. Tibullus has only fourteen instances all told in the 1376 lines of his elegy,¹ and only once does he make use of a complex variety.² To Lygdamus the device is almost unknown: there is but a single instance of it in the 290 lines of his poetry.³ The same is true of the forty lines by Sulpicia.⁴ Propertius employs it with even less frequency than Tibullus, but he exhibits more variety and skill in handling it. There are thirty-six instances in the 4024 lines,⁵ and eleven of these are of a complex variety.⁶

These instances taken together offer too little material from which to make deductions of any value. The various possible positions of the component members of a repetition are illustrated so evenly that no favored arrangement is discoverable. That there is greater variety in Propertius than in Tibullus may be accounted

¹ i, 4, 63; 8, 26; 9, 15; 9, 80; 10, 28; ii, 1, 37; 4, 11; 5, 117; 6, 7; 6, 9; 6, 11; iv, 2, 10; 3, 20; 6, 17.

² ii, 6, 11.

³ iii, 2, 1.

⁴ iv, 7, 10.

⁵ i, 8, 31; 8, 37; ii, 1, 48; 7, 19; 8, 6; 8, 8; 9, 52; 12, 13; 15, 50; 18, 3; 18, 4; 19, 7; 20, 27; 28, 7; 28, 42; 32, 1; 32, 56; iii, 3, 3; 5, 1; 5, 12; 6, 15; 15, 37; 20, 13; 25, 7; iv, 1, 35; 1, 73; 2, 3; 2, 64; 4, 35; 4, 82; 6, 1; 6, 13; 7, 92; 7, 94; 8, 81; 9, 4.

⁶ i, 8, 37; ii, 7, 19; 8, 6; 20, 27; 28, 7; 28, 42; 32, 1; 32, 56; iii, 3, 3; 20, 13; iv, 2, 64.

for by the fact that there is a greater number of instances in Propertius. On the other hand, Propertius seems to have something of Ovid's understanding of the effectiveness of the device, as is revealed in the ease with which he uses it. Such double repetitions as the following, for example:

Tu mihi sola places: placeam tibi, Cynthia, solus (ii, 7, 19).

Vivam, si vivet; si cadet illa, cadam (ii, 28, 42).

Nox mihi prima venit: primae date tempora noctis (iii, 20, 13).

have all the skill of balance and of word position so richly illustrated in Ovid.

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